

DID YOU KNOW?

AN EDUCATIONAL ARTICLE PRESENTED BY THE DNR SURVEY ADVISORY BOARD

WSDOT RIGHT OF WAY PLANS

Did you know that the alignment monuments along state highways do not define the right of way centerline? Those monuments were established to define the construction alignment. However, in many cases the construction alignment and the right of way alignment are one in the same.

In order to determine the relationship between the two alignments it is necessary to study both the contract plan and the right of way plan. At one time, the right of way plan was often an integral part of the contract. These plans are identified by the combined 'plan and profile' sheet layout. In current practice the right of way plan is a separate document. Although the right of way plan may be included within the contract, there is no construction data on the right of way plan itself.

A critical element often overlooked by many surveyors is a notation found in the revision block of the older right of way plans. This notation will usually consist of a date and the note "RW as acquired, alignment as Constructed." The plan itself may have alignment data, especially in the curves, lined out and replaced with other data. On the original plan this was done in color, usually red. Unfortunately, on a black and white copy of the plan it appears as though the original data was revised with new data. Since this occurs on the right of way plan it gives the illusion that the right of way centerline was changed. But, since all property rights are normally acquired prior to construction, the changes reflect revisions to the construction alignment.

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Admittedly, this was not the best process for non-department users of the plan. The key is to remember that these were intended as internal documents. Although available to the public, there was not a concerted effort to make them "user-friendly" outside of the agency. Fortunately, this practice has been discontinued. Today, when these plans are revised, a process has been created that separates the two alignment data and identifies which is for right of way and which is for construction. But this is done piecemeal as existing plans are revised so many of these plans still exist.

When locating state highway centerline monuments for boundary determination, remember that you are tying in the construction alignment. A review of both the contract plan and the right of way plan should reveal any differences between the two alignments.